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To: Microsoft ATR
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It appears that the government wants to ensure that Microsoft retains and even adds to its software monopoly both now and in the future by using marketing's "loss leader" approach to conquer the very small percentage of the software market that has not already been crushed by Microsoft.

Isn't there another way to settle, rather than push other software vendors out of potential markets. A school with little or no money may decide to use Linux as an alternative (if that is even viable). Linux seems to be the only significant operating system (OS) option to Microsoft on a typical individual's personal computer (which happens to be commodity hardware sliding ever so quickly toward obsolescence - what a contrast to Microsoft's applications!). What percent of the American population can think of another OS to load on a individual PC (besides Windows 98, Windows XP, Windows NT, etc.) (or getting all new hardware and OS with a Macintosh. They still make those don't they?). I cannot think of any other operating system to load on an individual PC, not a server, for regular daily individual use. But Linux is free and these schools will have no need to adopt it because the government has intervened in the free market and given these people Microsoft software. Not only will they get software, but they will get trained evangelists leading the classroom. I can only guess how many times a day the word Microsoft will be uttered by everyone, I will be suprised if even one day goes by without the utterance.

Isn't there some kind of legal principle where if a word is used over and over again, superfluously, then that word becomes public domain? Could Microsoft be synonymous for "indivual PC operating system and applications." Also, will anyone short of a computer professional, especially in a poor school, be able to find enough time to learn more than one operating system? more than one word processor? more than one spreadsheet application? more than one database management system? more than one presentation program? more than one email program? more than one calender / personal organizer program? more than one browser? What about computer languages, computing paradigms, business models, etc...

HURDLE 1: Can you name...

an operating system that does not begin with Windows?

a word processor besides MS Word?

a spreadsheet application besides MS Excel?

a database management system besides MS Access or MS SQL Server?

a presentation program besides MS Powerpoint, MS FrontPage, etc.?

an email program besides MS Outlook?

a calender / personal organizer program besides MS Outlook?

a browser besides MS Internet Explorer?

GOOD, you made it passed Hurdle #1 but how many answers for each question did you get? If you got one or two, I am willing to bet that

you are computer "savvy." Does one or two competitors constitute a market engaged in free competition? You may say that the list was too long for one hurdle, but I would propose that we only scratched the surface. Nevertheless, brevity will suffice for Hurdle #2:

HURDLE 2: What store, down the street from my house, in my neighborhood has this software (answered in Hurdle #1) on the shelf?

I am all for helping the needy; however, it seems that the government may have fallen for a shrewd ploy by Microsoft or even a sucker punch at the end of a tough fight. Better that the government make Microsoft give these schools \$500 million and keep its own software. Let the schools do what they would like with the money. I suppose the MS sales reps would be calling the schools to establish accounts the very next day. Let them compete with everyone else. Or is that what Microsoft was supposedly doing the past 10 to 26 years?

Maybe not everyone prefers the alternative mentioned above, maybe Microsoft...

" Microsoft will give the nation's poorest schools more than \$1 billion in cash, products and services in order to settle most of the private antitrust lawsuits filed against the huge software company. The proposed settlement, to be disbursed over five years, will pay for teacher training, technical support, refurbished computers and copies of Microsoft's most popular software, such as Windows and Office, at more than 12,500 schools, company spokesman Matt Pilla said." (USA Today 20-Nov-2001)